



Berrien County Trial Court

Courthouse - 811 Port Street, St. Joseph, MI 49085
(269) 983-7111, Ext. 8374; FAX (269) 982-8644

Honorable Mabel Johnson Mayfield
Presiding Family Division Judge

Kim Williams
Administrative Assistant

Good afternoon. My name is Mabel Mayfield and I am an elected Probate Judge, serving as Presiding Judge of the Family division in the Berrien County Trial Court.

As a former Legal Services attorney, Attorney Referee and now Judge I have served parents and children in Berrien County for 34 years.

35 years ago, you heard minimal if any discussion of an identified "school to prison pipeline".

Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism (CA) had not yet been identified as the very gateway to behavior predicting youth involvement in the juvenile court; which too often has now become a stepping-stone for young adults repeated incarceration in jail and or prison.

Please note that through this progression, there has for years been legislation addressing truants and yes, school districts have forever dealt with the student who was irregular in attendance. These were not issues unnoticed; simply underappreciated for their potential devastating outcomes.

Judge Allen is absolutely correct "Truancy is a major problem in Michigan". And I would add one that negatively impacts our state economy by hindering development of natural untapped creativity and innovation skills of our youth. Taxpayers often contribute twice toward the opportunity for an individual to secure a high school education. Initially at High School Graduation, or alternatively securing a GED as part of the Michigan Prisoner Re-entry Initiative (MPRI).

In the fall of 2013 at the invitation of our Governor, State Superintendent and Director of Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) I was gifted the opportunity to serve as Co-lead with our County RESA Superintendent. He accepted my invitation to join me as co-leads of the Berrien County School Justice Partnership (SJP) T.E.A.M (Transforming Education Advancing Minds).

Without question, the best decision made was the bringing together of our multidisciplinary team members; Juvenile Court Administrator, Assistant Prosecuting Attorney, Director of local Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Assistant RESA Superintendent, School Principal and CEO of the Benton Harbor Boys and Girls Club, each adding their perspective to identification of the problem and its solution.

We have added, Mental Health Professionals; psychologist, therapist/counselors, and a Sheriff's Deputy.

The diversity of perspective and integrated approach is critical. Like the accident at the intersection requiring the officer to interview witnesses on each of the four corners to get the clear picture.

I reemphasize the insight of Judge Allen. "The key focus is to keep children in school and as a result of that out of the justice /legal system. That in fact this legislation allows the school Code to talk to the Juvenile Code eliminating our unresolved "Failure to Communicate" .

We currently operating with the Tower of Babel approach where every district references Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism with their own meaning, and the objective just cannot be achieved.

Within thirty days of our return from the initial Summit we convened our initial team meeting. We labored and agreed upon a strategy to focus on K-5 grade students to effect long-term sustainable change.

15 days later our vision was unveiled to all county superintendents. Responsive to the leadership of Co-lead RESA Superintendent the resolution you have before you was signed by every school board in Berrien County as well as RESA's board.

Nine Districts representing 59% of the county's K-5 students reflecting a good cross-section of the county volunteered for the pilot.

Data immediately reflected :

- Most needy students are most impacted by chronic Absenteeism
- Parents are a significant factor
- Medical issues play a role
- Current strategies were mismatched to underlying issues.

Without a budget or incurring additional costs we utilized the county wide Power School Data Tracking, engaged free Professional Development from Safe and Civil Schools, and engaged teachers and students. The first year results were awesome. You have also been provided a graph reflecting a 3-year comparison percentage.

Our next step was adopting the Pathway to Potential Model (P2P) available through collaboration of schools and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). At the 2017 Summit our team shared the success story of one school.

The Success Coach provided by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is placed in the school working directly with identified "challenged" student for the purpose of linking services to the students and their families. They identify the root- cause – look at the big picture and provide tools to assist in getting the family on the right path to finding the solution.

You have been provided the data relative 47 individual students. The results are outstanding. Students successes are acknowledged and rewarded. It is continuously reinforced that "missing School ='s Missing out'

In preparing for testimony today I reviewed not only the proposed legislation but the proposed School Community Proposal.

I must confess at the conclusion of the break down of contained v. self-contained classrooms and the various possible applicable percentages, I concluded whether 12.5% or 16.66% for 87.5% or 83.34% the goal for all students should be providing the best possible path for success. The opportunity for 100%. Anything less is unacceptable. CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM IS THE ENEMY OF SUCCESS.

_____ **Board of Education**

A RESOLUTION URGING A COMMON DEFINITION OF TRUANCY AND CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM.

WHEREAS, an educated citizenry is Michigan's best investment for future success.

WHEREAS, the long-term desired outcome of public education is that all youth in Michigan graduate from high school.

WHEREAS, the Michigan School-Justice Partnership group is an integral part of the proposed amendments to the Revised School Code, Act 451 of 1976, regarding truancy and chronic absenteeism.

WHEREAS, the _____ Board of Education recognizes that the creation of a school learning culture through the concentrated efforts of school, parent, community and justice system collaboration provides escalating impact to decrease truancy and chronic absenteeism and increase student achievement.

WHEREAS, the _____ Board of Education supports a common definition of chronic absenteeism as a student who misses ten percent (10%) or more of the enrolled school days in a school year, whether absenteeism is due to unexcused, excused or disciplinary absences.

WHEREAS, the _____ Board of Education supports a common definition of truancy as a student who has ten (10) or more unexcused absences per school year. A student should be counted as truant only once in a given school year.

WHEREAS, the accomplishment of reduced student truancy and chronic absenteeism will result in increased student academic success, improve the business climate for the state, promote economic development, and reduce the costs of adjudication/incarceration.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the _____ Board of Education supports a common definition of truancy and chronic absenteeism and strongly urges the Michigan Legislature to support the amendments to the Revised School Code, Act 451 of 1976, in order to maintain Michigan's commitment to school attendance and increase academic achievement for all students.

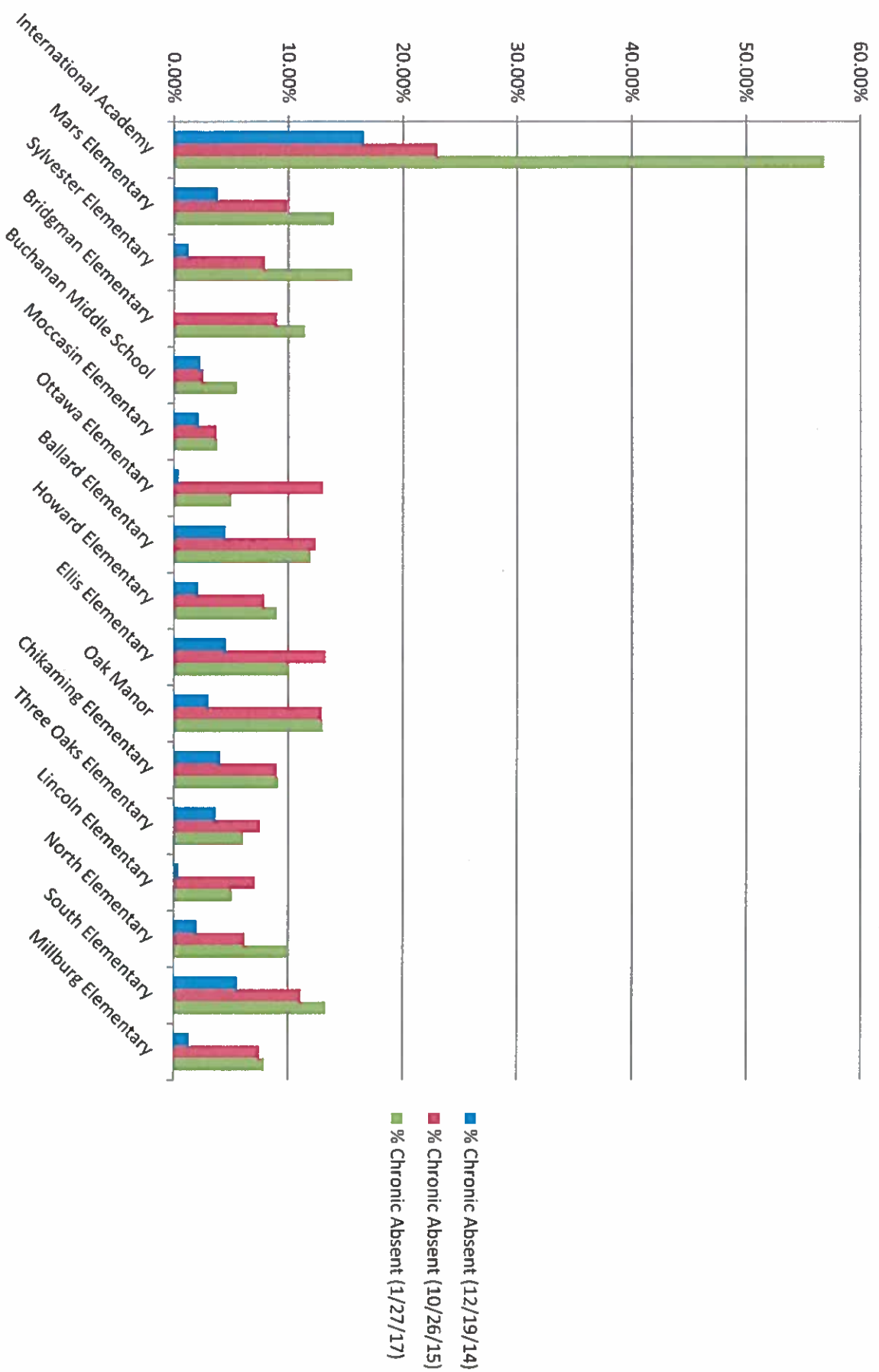
PASSED and APPROVED this _____ day of _____, 2014

_____ Board of Education

_____, President

_____, Secretary

Berrien School Justice Partnership Pilot Bldgs. 3-Year Comparison Percentage Chronically Absent



Student	Absences 15-16	Absences 16-17	Change (%)
1	18.5	8	56.76
2	17	9	47.06
3	18	33.5	-86.11
4	21	2.5	88.10
5	21	15.5	26.19
6	32.5	14.5	55.38
7	25.5	25.5	0.00
8	26.5	19	28.30
9	17	12	29.41
10	34	23	32.35
11	17.5	14.5	17.14
12	20.5	17.5	14.63
13	17.5	20.5	-17.14
14	17	5.5	67.65
15	17	12	29.41
16	24	4.5	81.25
17	18	13.5	25.00
18	27	9	66.67
19	24	23	4.17
20	23	17.5	23.91
21	17	19	-11.76
22	35	30.5	12.86
23	33	18.5	43.94
24	33.5	14	58.21
25	19.5	26.5	-35.90
26	19	6.5	65.79
27	25.5	6.5	74.51
28	30	21.5	28.33
29	21	11.5	45.24
30	24.5	16	34.69
31	22	4.5	79.55
32	35	37.5	-7.14
33	29	47	-62.07
34	24.5	27.5	-12.24
35	18.5	4.5	75.68
36	23.5	11.5	51.06
37	19	16.5	13.16
38	32	6.5	79.69
39	22	21	4.55
40	21.5	20	6.98
41	21	19	9.52

42	70	46	34.29
43	21.5	11.5	46.51
44	17.5	17.5	0.00
45	35	58.5	-67.14
46	25	23.5	6.00
47	29.5	39.5	-33.90

Change in Attendance from 2015-16 to 2016-17

